

AUG 13 1964

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INSIDE REPORT: *McCarthy* *Versus Humphrey*

By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak
WASHINGTON.

After nearly nine months of trial balloons and speculation, it is now clear that President Johnson's choice for Vice-President would be Sen. Eugene McCarthy, of Minnesota—if, that is, the President had a truly free hand.

It is an enormous "if." Johnson's freedom is limited in the sense that the overwhelming choice of Democratic party leaders and workers is not McCarthy but his colleague from Minnesota: Sen. Hubert Humphrey.

Paradoxically, Mr. Johnson's elimination of Robert F. Kennedy as a possibility—intended to free the President's hand—actually tends to restrict his choice. With the Attorney General out, Kennedy New Frontiersmen hopped on the Humphrey bandwagon to create a potent coalition including most party leaders outside the South.

Of course, none of these party leaders is going to defect to Barry Goldwater because both Bobby Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey are passed over, but the President would face the threat of dampened enthusiasm by party workers.

Is this risk worth taking? These are McCarthy's qualifications from the President's standpoint:

Compatibility: Johnson and McCarthy, old and close friends, get along easily together. The taut-nerved, high-strung Texan feels comfortable in the presence of the smooth-as-butter Minnesotan.

Past loyalty: McCarthy was an LBJ man in 1960 when John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson fought for the Presidential nomination. Actually, McCarthy placed the name of Adlai E. Stevenson in nomination with an electrifying speech at the Los Angeles convention. But this fitted the Johnson strategy of trying to stop Kennedy with a Stevenson stalking horse.

Southern exposure: McCarthy is perfectly acceptable throughout the South—the one section where Humphrey is unacceptable to party leaders.

But McCarthy's most important qualification is less tangible. McCarthy would presumably be the kind of Vice-President that Mr. Johnson was to President Kennedy—unobtrusive, quiet, handling only those duties assigned him.

It is questionable whether the ebullient Humphrey, ideas radiating from him at a furious clip, could comfortably fill such a subdued rôle.

At a recent White House breakfast of Congressional leaders, for instance, Humphrey held forth at some length on the best way to handle Barry Goldwater on the civil rights question. Although they might have been imagining it, some breakfasters perceived an annoyed scowl cross Mr. Johnson's face at this time.

McCarthy's real obstacles on his path to Vice-Presidency are outside, not inside, the White House—particularly within organized labor.

AFL-CIO President George Meany has made his own neutrality clear to McCarthy's supporters. But Meany can't control labor leaders who grumble that McCarthy, a labor stalwart as a House member, has taken a conservative turn since his election to the Senate in 1958.

Walter Reuther, of the United Auto Workers, has been particularly upset by the prospect of a Johnson-McCarthy ticket. Accordingly, he arranged a meeting two weeks ago with David Dubinsky, of the Ladies Garment Workers Union, and Alex Rose, of the Hatters Union, the two bosses of New York's Liberal party.

They agreed that Mr. Johnson should be told labor favors either Bob Kennedy (before his elimination by the President, that is) or Humphrey—implicitly vetoing McCarthy. But they cannot advertise their preference for Humphrey too loudly without torpedoing his efforts to pick up business support.

Nor can McCarthy boast important support within party ranks. A month ago, he flew to Los Angeles for a private conference with Jesse (Big Daddy) Unruh, powerful speaker of the California State Assembly. Unruh quickly informed McCarthy that his choice was Bobby Kennedy, and McCarthy returned East with empty arms. He has yet to land a big one like Unruh.

In contrast, Humphrey has a personal following that is older, broader and more devoted than Mr. Johnson's own. But considering the President's ego, this could prove as much a curse as a blessing.

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